

Senate Bill No. 849

Passed the Senate August 29, 2006

Secretary of the Senate

Passed the Assembly August 24, 2006

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

This bill was received by the Governor this _____ day
of _____, 2006, at _____ o'clock ____M.

Private Secretary of the Governor

CHAPTER _____

An act to add Section 104324.27 to the Health and Safety Code, relating to environmental health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 849, Escutia. Environmental health data tracking.

Existing law establishes the Environmental Health Surveillance System through an interagency agreement between the State Department of Health Services, the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA), and the University of California if authorized by the regents, for the purpose of, among other things, tracking and evaluating a variety of chronic diseases in relation to environmental exposures.

This bill would require, pursuant to that interagency agreement, the establishment of the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking within the department's Center for Health Statistics for the purpose of implementing the California Health Tracking Program. The bill would require the department and the Cal/EPA to each provide one 50% time research scientist as staff to direct the tracking program. The bill would prescribe the office's objectives over a 3-year period and would require the office to complete certain duties during the first year after it is established. The bill would require that its provisions be implemented either through federal or private funding sources or by absorbing the costs through existing resources.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Chronic diseases and injuries account for 75 percent of all deaths in California.

(b) The medical and income-loss costs of chronic diseases for the state in 2000 were estimated to be \$107 billion.

(c) Researchers have strong scientific or suggestive evidence showing that many of these diseases, including, but not limited

to, respiratory illness, adverse pregnancy outcomes, cancer, and developmental disabilities, are associated with environmental exposures.

(d) If preventable environmental hazards account for even 1 percent of the cost of all chronic diseases in California, action to identify and reduce these environmental exposures would save the state hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

(e) The State of California has an inadequate ongoing surveillance system to describe trends in environmental hazards or exposures and environmentally related diseases, and inadequate resources to carry out special studies to explain the trends or to explore the policy implications of its findings.

(f) Environmental surveillance systems are necessary to monitor the frequency and geographic distribution of these illnesses and exposures and to protect public health.

(g) Ongoing surveillance of environmentally related diseases and priority environmental hazards should be the function and responsibility of the State of California.

(h) There are multiple agencies in California that collect and manage health and environmental data, and those databases, which could be used for tracking, need to be updated and made uniform. However, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the data.

(i) There needs to be a coordinating body that brings these agencies together and promotes collaboration and sets the priorities for updating these databases and systems. The cost to integrate, coordinate, and analyze the data is only a fraction of the cost of collecting the data.

(j) California has suffered over 100 deaths and an unknown number of illnesses related to the recent heat wave, which was the deadliest in the state's history.

(k) The State of California has an inadequate ongoing surveillance system to describe trends in heat-related deaths and morbidity which are likely to continue with the accumulation of greenhouse gases and increasing temperatures due to global warming.

(l) California has the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of any state in the United States, emitting roughly 500 million metric tons of GHGs annually.

(m) Climate change and global warming poses a serious public health threat for the citizens of California.

(n) Last year the Governor signed an executive order, which established climate change emission reduction targets for California and the development of a market-based emissions cap system.

(o) An interagency office of environmental health tracking should be established and staffed jointly by the State Department of Health Services and the California Environmental Protection Agency.

(p) If there are insufficient funds from the department or Cal-EPA to jointly staff the interagency office, either the department or Cal-EPA may unilaterally carry out the interagency office's objectives.

SEC. 2. Section 104324.27 is added to the Health and Safety Code, immediately following Section 104324.25, to read:

104324.27. (a) Pursuant to the memorandum of understanding set forth in Section 104324.25, the department and the California Environmental Protection Agency shall establish the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking within the department's Center for Health Statistics for the purpose of implementing the California Health Tracking Program.

(b) As used in this chapter "office of health tracking" means the Interagency Office of Environmental Health Tracking established in subdivision (a).

(c) The department and the California Environmental Protection Agency shall both provide staff for the office of health tracking with one 50 percent time research scientist to direct the tracking program. All extramurally funded staff which are funded through the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shall be transferred to the Center for Health Statistics. The research scientists shall, among other things, assist local communities by providing technical assistance to obtain and interpret needed environmental health data.

(d) The objectives of the office of health tracking shall be to accomplish the following over a three-year period:

(1) Coordinate the multiple tracking data collection activities across various state agencies and work to promote access to priority databases and utilization of existing health and

environmental surveillance information to support examination of the relationship between health and the environment.

(2) Oversee the implementation of the recommendations of the final report of the working group established pursuant to this chapter.

(3) Facilitate the dissemination of surveillance data to the public and researchers and provide technical assistance on how to interpret the data.

(4) Collaborate with the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the California Environmental Protection Agency to develop predictions of exposure, increased temperatures, and increased numbers of emergency room visits, hospital admissions, and deaths by county, which are vital for health care planning for emergencies similar to the last heat wave.

(5) Develop data sharing agreements, and develop procedures to protect individual privacy.

(6) Develop a strategic plan that would include a mission statement, critical issues, core priorities for research and surveillance, identification of internal and external stakeholders, and a work plan describing future program development.

(7) Collate and analyze data, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

(A) Identifying trends and geographic patterns of disease and environmental hazards or exposures.

(B) Analyzing hazards, exposures, and diseases with relation to socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity.

(C) Provide baseline data and present descriptive information relevant to policy formation that are consistent with existing goals of the program.

(8) Develop a strategic plan, in consultation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, for obtaining missing information on chemicals as necessary for analyzing significant environmental exposures and potentially damaging health and environmental effects, including reports from the National Academy of Sciences and other relevant studies.

(9) Produce a report to the Legislature once every two years on the status of surveillance activities and related research programs.

(e) The office of health tracking shall use the program's existing advisory bodies composed of members selected from

impacted communities, local government, environmental advocacy groups, the regulated community, labor, and other nongovernmental organizations to review and comment on its findings, to provide input on future directions, to comment on the biennial report, and to ensure accountability to communities and the public.

(f) Any additional funding for the office of health tracking, shall come from federal or private sources. The office of health tracking shall establish a state infrastructure that would signal the commitment of the state to environmental health surveillance to private and federal funding sources and thus, would facilitate further funding for the office. Federal sources that should be targeted for funding include the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Private sources for funding may include the California Wellness Foundation, the California Endowment, the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, the Trust for America's Health, and the Public Health Trust. The CDC-funded California Environmental Health Tracking Program has awarded the State Department of Health Services a nine-hundred-thousand-dollars (\$900,000) grant renewal for its program activities from the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention. This mechanism would fund surveillance activities over a five-year period. The half-time research scientists shall work closely with the extramurally funded staff from the CDC-funded tracking program to propose program activities that could overlap with the goals and mission of the office of health tracking.

SEC. 3. It is the intent of this act that activities proposed shall not be carried out at the expense of any of the department's existing registry activities. During the first year after it is established, the office of health tracking shall do all of the following:

(a) Develop and sign cooperative agreements for data sharing between the office of health tracking, the Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Control in the department, and the boards, departments, and offices of the California Environmental Protection Agency. These agreements shall be modeled after the recent Memorandum of Understanding signed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States

Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate collection of health and environmental data, and shall carry out the mandate of Section 104324.25 of the Health and Safety Code.

(b) Develop a strategic plan that shall include (1) a mission statement, (2) identification of both critical issues and core priorities for research and surveillance and internal and external stakeholders, and (3) a work plan describing future program development.

(c) Develop extramural proposals to seek federal and foundation funds to establish pilot tracking projects, fund additional staff positions, and develop solid cost estimates and proposals for a tracking function.

SEC. 4. It is not the intent of the Legislature to reduce existing levels of funding provided to other surveillance programs administered by the State Department of Health Services.

SEC. 5. This act shall be implemented by the State Department of Health Services and the California Environmental Protection Agency either through federal or private funding sources, or by absorbing the costs through existing resources. However, in the event that either entity cannot absorb the costs or lacks outside funding, the other entity may move forward unilaterally in carrying out the objectives of the act.

Approved _____, 2006

Governor